

Title: **The balance of power in rural marketing networks: a case study of snake trading in Cambodia**

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Abstract: The rapid growth of crocodile farming in Cambodia has created a domestic market for snakes as a food supply that operates alongside the international trade of skins and live animals. In times of fish scarcity small-scale fishers living on Tonle Sap Lake participate in what has been shown to be the world's largest snake hunt in order to supply these markets. We look at the structure and performance of these markets to test the prevailing view that producers are weak participants in small-scale rural market networks. We show that fishers can seldom access markets directly and trade typically operates through an elaborate network of traders to transport the snakes from flooded hunting grounds to landing sites, markets and crocodile farms. Despite the fishers' dependence on intermediary traders for market access, as well as the provision of credit, we found they were not as weak as often assumed to be. Through analysing price trends at different actor levels we have shown that changes in the final price of snakes and costs of trading are reflected in the price received by fishers, and that prices are co-determined by both fishers and traders at landing sites. The position of traders appears to be weakened by the increasing scarcity of snakes whereby competition to secure a supply decreases the incentive for dishonesty over market prices. This may explain the stronger position of fishers in the snake market. This information has wide implications for marketing interventions aimed at both poverty reduction and resource conservation.